

Legislative Recommendations for 2004 and Beyond

Indiana is a leader in educational improvement. Our state accountability system was cited as a model of excellence during Congressional consideration of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), and our accountability plan, built on the foundation of P.L.221-1999, was one of the first five state plans approved by the Secretary of Education under this sweeping federal legislation. ASAP (Indiana Accountability System for Academic Progress, <http://www.asap.state.in.us>), our internet-based accountability information system, was praised by the President of the United States. We require every public school to have a school improvement plan and professional development program aligned with school improvement goals, one of few, if any, states to do so. Now, we must continue to pursue excellence. We must build on the progress made to date, consistent with actions called for in P.L.146-1999, P.L.221-1999, and the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and consistent with the vision contained in the Indiana's P-16 Plan for Improving Student Achievement - Phase I, adopted by Indiana's Education Roundtable on October 28, 2003.

In continued pursuit of educational excellence, the members of the Indiana State Board of Education urge the Indiana General Assembly to—

- C **Stay the course on accountability.** No fundamental changes should be made to our state testing and accountability system. The school improvement system created by P.L.221-1999 requires improvement of all schools, and ISTEP tests not only what students know but the level of their skills in applying that knowledge – strengths that are not present in other states' accountability systems. Changes, such as altering the ISTEP testing date, mean delay and added expense. We should not delay implementation of P.L.221. The format of ISTEP was lauded by Achieve, Inc, which also made suggestions for improvement. We must maintain the rigor of our standards. We can and should insist on test question rigor and alignment with the standards. We should not, however, make fundamental changes that are costly and delay the longitudinal data required for accountability.

Leadership		Vision		Advocacy
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- C **Strengthen and improve the remediation programs, technical assistance efforts, and professional development grants that are necessary to help students learn.** If we are to be successful in closing learning gaps among our students, we must focus resources on schools serving high numbers of students not meeting state academic standards.
- C **Support full day Kindergarten programs and allow students to enter Kindergarten at an age comparable with other states.** Research shows that early learning experiences are critical to students' future success and that there is no benefit to delaying entrance. Indiana's entrance age is so far out of line with other states that it works a disservice on our students.
- C **Fund the school rewards program.** The ISTEP Achievement Grant statute included in P.L.221 creates a reward system that acknowledges growth in achievement of every student. Like other aspects of Indiana's accountability system, our rewards program is far superior to programs in other states, but this critical aspect of accountability is not funded. Rewards are a required component of P.L.221-1999 and NCLB. The achievement grants should be funded as soon as the state's fiscal situation permits.
- C **Continue to support the comprehensive curriculum mandated by statute.** There is fear that subject areas that are not included on the state test will be slighted. Yet, foreign languages, fine arts, technology, social studies (scheduled to be added to ISTEP), and other areas enrich the curriculum, provide practical skills, and contribute to students' knowledge and ability in English, math, and science. The areas that are not tested must not be lost.
- C **Examine the accountability measures for schools that participate in public funding but are not subject to the consequences of P.L.221-1999.** The public should be assured that adequate accountability exists for all schools that participate in state funding.

The State Board of Education also has identified a desirable amendment to the Annual Performance Report law. One of the data elements to be reported is average class size. We believe actual class size is a more valuable piece of information for parents.

One of the statutory responsibilities of the Indiana State Board of Education is to make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly on the educational needs of the state. As partial fulfillment of our responsibility, the members of the State Board of Education are pleased to transmit these legislative recommendations for 2004.

As the bipartisan board charged with establishing educational goals, standards, and objectives, we thank legislators for the prominent role that education plays in the General Assembly. We stand ready to participate in the important legislative discussions that will take place in the coming months. We intend to comment on pending legislation and would welcome an opportunity to meet with legislators and other interested persons to discuss mutual concerns.

The Members of the Indiana State Board of Education